

Department: Philosophy

Faculty Evaluation Guidelines

Effective August 1, 2020

Approvals:

Department Chair

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Date:

9/may/2020

Dean

Date

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I. Fore-matter

A. Mission Statement

The mission of the MSU Philosophy Department is to provide our students, ourselves, and our community with both formal and informal occasions to reflect upon and engage in, in a serious and systematic way, the great human conversation about the nature and meaning of human existence, with an eye to our correlative commitments to the concepts of truth, freedom, and opportunity.

Philosophy holds fast to a pursuit of the truth and an examination in which no questions are barred and in which no result is unconsidered, regardless of their beauty, utility, political correctness, or popular appeal. Philosophy names the occasion for the mutual pursuit of truth by faculty and students. But in order to maintain a lively connection with and to contribute to the ongoing endeavor that is philosophy, an essential element of this mission of this department is the fundamental activity of continuing education and professional contributions in the form of talks, communications, commentary, papers, and monographs in our field. In our view, research and instruction are inseparable and so our Department upholds the unity of purpose inherent in the very notion of the teacher-scholar. Through its extracurricular activities, student organizations and the departmental colloquium, we also invite our students to take first steps in similar directions.

An education in philosophy is an education for life because it addresses questions and issues of enduring interest, in an engaged and sometimes practical way. Philosophical inquiry recognizes no pre-established limits or disciplinary boundaries in its critical examination of topics of human concern. It enlarges the student's horizon of ideas and encourages the student to critically examine and creatively extend these ideas in a free and open manner. The possibilities of unlocking human potential and increasing self-understanding follow from tools that increase individual autonomy and provide for the liberation from received opinions and empty custom. In this way, individuals may be prepared for a fuller and deeper civic participation and responsibility. Among philosophy's special gifts are enrichments to what are sometimes called "letters" or the "humanities" or "humane studies." On its humanistic side, the Department provides important and singular offerings to the University's General Studies requirements, as well as to such programs as Legal Studies.

Our Department is committed to providing academic programs of study, which feature curricular flexibility and individualized learning, with an eye to increased opportunity. The skills and abilities associated with the disciplinary rigor of the philosophy program – especially analytical and abstract thinking and clarity in thought and written exposition – are transferable to almost any conceivable human endeavor. Indeed, the emphasis on logic and method are part and parcel of the self-identity of both philosophy and modern natural science. Hence, within and without the academy, it is important to note our discipline's ongoing contributions to mathematical logic, theoretical linguistics, cognitive psychology, computer science, artificial intelligence and statistics and game theory. Accordingly, the Department also assists a number of colleges, such as the School of Business, and other programs, including Computer Science, IDP, and the Linguistics minor, among others.

B. Our Goals

For our students to gain a detailed understanding, sophisticated appreciation, and critical awareness:

1. ... of the nature and complexity of human thought, of its critical and creative possibilities, and of the long-standing and continuing contributions (and reactions) to central defining moments in world civilization;
2. ... of the core problems, issues, and approaches, first delineated and associated with philosophical inquiry, and of the ways in which different (sometimes unstated) assumptions shape, determine and constrain fields of human inquiry; and
3. ... of the possible ramifications and innate complexity of even basic philosophical ideas, and the ability to adjudge and evaluate such notions in the light of the purposive aspects of human existence.

II. CLAS General Standards of Performance

To clarify expectations, the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences has established a set of General Standards of Performance for all faculty within the College. Compliance with CLAS Standards is a prerequisite to a satisfactory performance rating on faculty evaluations.

General Standards of Performance for Faculty

College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

The General Standards of Performance for the Faculty in the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences:

1. Timely performance of responsibilities and other responsibilities as specified in the faculty member's contract, the Handbook, and in accordance with the academic and procedural calendars including submission of grades by the deadline established by the Registrar.
2. Adherence to accepted standards of professional conduct as established by the Handbook and AAUP.
3. Faculty shall be responsible for the conduct of assigned classes and submitting grades by the University deadline; shall provide the chair with timely notice in the event that they cannot conduct a class (or classes); and, pursuant to written departmental policy, shall arrange, when possible, for instruction to be provided when they cannot be present – either by a substitute or by class assignment.
4. During the first week of class faculty shall present to all students attending class a syllabus containing the course description, their grading criteria, CLAS syllabus policies, and special notices required by law or institutional policy.
5. Faculty shall, as established by departmental policies, adopt such procedures as necessary to assure that adequate and accurate records of student performance are maintained.
6. Full-time faculty shall establish, post, and keep a minimum of 5 office hours weekly during each academic term of the regular academic year.
7. The normal teaching load for full-time faculty is 24 semester credit hours per academic year.
8. In addition to teaching their classes, full-time faculty members shall prepare for classes, evaluate students' performance, confer with and advise students. Tenure-line faculty will participate in committee work, scholarly activities, service and other appropriate professional activities. Full-time faculty are expected to devote an average of at least 40 hours per week during the contract year to meeting their teaching and other obligations.

9. Faculty shall keep syllabi and student records for all classes for one calendar year after the end of the semester in which the course was taught.
10. Faculty shall respond to emails in a timely manner as established by their departmental policies.

III. Guideline to Achieving Tenure

Teaching is job one and comprises the bulk of our time and effort. We require generalists who are able to work not only in areas peripheral to their own but also in fields a bit beyond their comfort zone. And yet we also require specialists, those with a clearly defined area of expertise. And so you must be both: a generalist and a specialist. Further, in the mind of the Department, good teaching always returns to original texts – and contexts, where practicable. The relative percentage of lecture and discussion cannot be fixed but must vary from individual to individual and circumstance to circumstance. But since philosophy is rarely reducible to “information,” techniques favoring the mere conveyance of such will scarcely find favor here.

The requirements of teaching and advising place a high burden on our limited time and energies. There is nevertheless a long-standing tradition of writing, connectable with a specific set of expectations, concerning professional development. And while these expectations are aimed at the highest level of achievement – one that goes far beyond any of the *Handbook* requirements – they express goals that can point the way for all faculty members to grow and develop in our profession; and thereby, for untenured faculty members to become practically aware of the strongest possible case for tenure.

In what has historically been a small department with a high teaching load, several important imperatives have emerged. There must be a certain degree of flexibility in curricular offerings; and this must be coupled with a willingness to share courses, even those closest to one’s own areas of special expertise. The individual faculty possess distinct identities and developed aptitudes, but we believe that it benefits both faculty and students if the same course is taught by different instructors and, thereby, that no instructor remain rigidly within the walls of her or his professional expertise. Similarly, our program has an abiding commitment to liberal (or general) education. One important expression of this commitment lies in the impulse to “build bridges” to other programs and disciplines. Others lie in the development of courses of study that take philosophy to the limits of the discipline and which explore territory and topics at this hinterland.

Especially in a small and close-knit department, professional development is an essential element of both successful teaching and of a vital intellectual community. Because we affirm the unity of the teacher and the scholar, the ability to both create and articulate new courses and new patterns for our program is tightly connected with professional development. In like manner, the department has placed a high premium on the ability of individual faculty members to construct a wide-ranging and potentially innovative and fruitful *research program of investigation and of writing*. Such a program, though it may stem from interests that led to one’s dissertation, is unlikely to remain strictly within that narrow ambit: instead it should encompass those interests and yet ultimately outstrip them. As the program develops, it should become pursuable for a number of years to come, although it may evolve in ways that cannot now be foreseen or anticipated. Hence, while there is no necessity that this research program issue (directly or indirectly) in publication, the need to spell out and to share this program, and its fruits, with the

department as a whole has been of central importance. In summary, while teaching at MSU Denver may mean that you publish less, especially at the beginning, than you peers at other institutions, the need for reflection and expression of that program remains pertinent.

Practically speaking, this suggests active engagement with, as well as general participation in, the department colloquium series. This may include, as well, special workshops devoted to curricular or other program issues. Furthermore, while it is not a strict requirement of the dossier process, it should be obvious that the more one can express the nature and scope of one's intellectual project, your colleagues will be better prepared to estimate and articulate your special contribution to our collective effort. Here too the department places a premium on those who can relate their corner of the philosophical world to the department, to the discipline and to the humanities, as components of a liberal education.

An academic department is not a collection of independent contractors but, instead, requires the effective interconnection of its members, who form a unique community. The special significance of the contribution that each individual member makes to that collective endeavor should be plainly apparent to all of its members. While the bulk of this discussion has concerned professional development, the importance of service to the continued good health of the department also requires emphasis. All in all, the common purpose of our department, as stipulated in our department mission and goals, must be kept always in view.

IV. Criteria for Performance Evaluations

A. Teaching

The Handbook states: Teaching is a complex and reflective human activity that, in the higher education context, is offered in a forum that is advanced, semi-public, and essentially critical in nature. No single definition can possibly suffice to cover the range of talents that go into excellent teaching or that could be found across the board in the varied departments and disciplines of an entire college. Good teachers are scholars, researchers, inventors, scientists, creators, artists, professionals, investigators, practitioners or those with advanced expertise or experience who share knowledge, using appropriate methodologies, and who demonstrate and encourage enthusiasm about the subject matter in such a way as to leave the student with a lasting and vivid conviction of having benefited from that interaction.

Effective teachers maintain high academic standards, prepare students for professional work and development, facilitate student achievement, and provide audiences for student work. Some might add that the best teaching transmits specific skills or enhances talents that students possess, while others would note that good teaching develops habits of mind or provides models of scholarly, scientific, artistic, or professional behavior and inquiry much more important than particular information. Faculty typically aspire to a number of other civic purposes in the classroom that may also include encouraging their students to long for the truth, to aspire to achievement, to emulate heroes, to become just, or to do good, for example.

Instruction is only part of what teaching involves but because it is the most observable and measurable, it obtains a highlighted role in the evaluation of teaching (although no one should ever confuse excellent

instruction with good teaching!). Therefore, the Handbook goes on to explain that, at the instructional level, *the most important responsibilities of a teacher to his/her students* are as follows:

(1) Content expertise: *To demonstrate knowledge and/or relevant experience:*

Effective teachers display knowledge of their subject matters in the relevant learning environment (classroom, on-line, hybrid, field work, etc.), which typically includes the skills, competencies, and knowledge in a specific subject area in which the faculty has received advanced experience, training, or education.

The Department deems some aspects of currency, revision and development to be in order. Teachers must be prepared to, for example, make changes in the courses as new developments in the field arise or incorporate research and/or attendance at professional conferences that resulted in changes in content or methods of teaching, as relevant. Courses should be revised from time to time, by reworking texts, order, or assignments in individual courses or contributing to substantially changing the course syllabus.

(2) Instructional Design: *To re-order and re-organize this knowledge/experience for student learning:*

Effective teachers design course objectives, syllabi, materials, activities, and experiences that are conducive to learning.

The Department deems that syllabi must be ordered and clear, activities coherent, grading and other expectations explicit, and that, indeed, every component of the course contributes to the purposes for which the course is offered. Those purposes include their place in our program, including purposes of assessment, and the state learning objectives. Consequently, a clear specification of the desired learning objectives, and of the means through which they will be assessed, on course syllabi, and of texts and other materials designed to enable students to meet the learning objectives, and of class assignments should assist in indicating that all are clearly aligned with the desired objectives.

(3) Instructional Delivery: *To communicate and “translate” this knowledge/experience into a format accessible to students:*

Effective teachers communicate information clearly, create environments conducive to learning, and use an appropriate variety of teaching methods.

The Department deems that good instruction demands attention to each of the three aforementioned criterial marks.

(4) Instructional Assessment: *To evaluate the mastery and other accomplishments of students:*

Effective teachers design assessment procedures appropriate to course objectives, ensure fairness in student evaluation and grading, and provide constructive feedback on student work.

The Department deems that “appropriateness” of instructional assessment may be evidenced by, for example, but are not limited to: techniques designed to help students improve their mastery of the material and their powers of self-examination, self-criticism and self-improvement, e.g., written assignments with the possibility of subsequent revision; and/or the creative combination of multiple and diverse modes and moments of assessment.

Furthermore, the Department suggests that early and complete qualitative and quantitative discussion and reports be made to students as well as the following: accurate and complete records of student progress; clear criteria, made comprehensible to the students, for the assignment of grades to individual assignments; and returning the assignments in a timely fashion.

(5) Advising In and Beyond the Classroom: To provide guidance for students as they pursue undergraduate and post-baccalaureate education and/or employment:

Effective teachers interact with students to provide career guidance and information, degree program guidance and information (e.g., advice on an appropriate schedule to facilitate graduation), and answers to questions relating to a discipline.

The Department deems that student interaction for the express purposes of the main content of student advising should be evidenced by, for example, primarily (i) complete and concise records of advisees and the specific information and advice proffered or (ii) the regular review and adjustment of student progress reports or assistance in the creation of materials suitable for use as advising information, including information relating to either graduate or vocational endeavors. Examples of what comes under this heading may also include, but are not limited to, providing letters of recommendation or working with students in discipline-related activities, such as student organizations, competitions or conferences.

(6) NOTE: Teaching performance will be evaluated based on the teaching done by a faculty member. Faculty who teach less than twelve (12) credit hours each semester will not be penalized for performing other critical duties needed by the Department, College/School, or University. Normally, these responsibilities will be delineated in and accounted for through reassigned time awards and evaluations and documented in Digital Measures.

A Note on SRIs

The Handbook elaborates, quite clearly, *how* the information contained in dossiers is to be *considered*; it states:

... the duties of higher education professionals are complex and diverse. **No one source can adequately reflect an individual’s performance or carry the burden associated with important personnel decisions. Therefore, the review process requires multiple sources of information** that encompass the complex and diverse work of faculty; **collectively these data should present a holistic picture** of individual faculty as each seeks tenure and/or promotion [our emphases].

Consequently, we tend to view the numerical data, provided by the SRIs, as just *one* component, among many, that simply cannot be singled out for special consideration without clearly violating the preceding, guiding words of the Handbook on how dossiers are to be considered and evaluated.

Furthermore, we must rely quite heavily on the discussion of teaching, also found in the Handbook:

- a. **Teaching:** Teaching is a complex and reflective human activity that, in the higher education context, is offered in a forum that is advanced, semi-public, and essentially critical in nature. No single definition can possibly suffice to cover the range of talents that go into excellent teaching or that could be found across the board in the varied departments and disciplines of an entire college or university. Good teachers are scholars, researchers, inventors, scientists, creators, artists, professionals, investigators, practitioners or those with advanced expertise or experience who share knowledge, using appropriate methodologies and who demonstrate and encourage enthusiasm about the subject matter in such a way as to leave the student with a lasting and vivid conviction of having benefited from that interaction.

Effective teachers typically maintain high academic standards, prepare students for professional work and development, facilitate student achievement, and provide audiences for student work. Some might add that the best teaching transmits specific skills or enhances talents that students already possess, while others would note that good teaching develops habits of mind or provides models of scholarly, scientific, artistic, or professional behavior and inquiry much more important than particular information. Faculty typically aspire to a number of other civic purposes in the classroom that may also include encouraging their students to long for the truth, to aspire to achievement, to emulate heroes, to become just, or to do good, for example.

It is *teaching* that we are evaluating and the SRIs provide only a (1) **student** (2) **rating of** (3) **instruction (and not an evaluation of teaching)**. Instruction is delimited to a small subset of competencies that serve merely as a *sine qua non*: they are necessary but not sufficient conditions of good teaching. But the two “global” questions of the SRIs in no way plug into any of these separable categories, in all events.

Finally, ‘deviation from the departmental mean’ is a completely inadequate standard, with no Handbook validation, that threatens to unduly punish those in high performing departments, such as ours.

Therefore, we both exercise and commend due caution in the proper use of that numerical data.

Insufficient Performance

For example, someone who did not engage in any of the aforementioned and instead who never revised their courses or never created new courses or never participated in, at any level, in the departmental process of curricular revision or in the improvement of their pedagogical abilities, who failed to supply a sufficiently detailed syllabus within the first week or relied upon an outmoded pedagogical paradigm, who failed to offer early and numerous possibilities for the assessment of student progress or failed to return graded assignments in a timely fashion, who did not consistently meet office hours or never participated in Departmental activities related to advising and/or was unable to offer either effective or vocational or graduate advising, etc. would not meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

For example, someone who did engage in most or all of the aforementioned and accomplished them to a high level of competence would meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Promotion to Professor

For example, someone who did engage in most or all of the aforementioned and performed those in a superlative fashion and who creates new enrichment opportunities for students, etc. would meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Post-Tenure Review

Same as Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor.

B. Scholarly Activities

The Handbook states: *Scholarly and creative activities are disciplinary or interdisciplinary expressions or interpretations that develop ideas, frame questions, create new forms of representation, solve problems, or explore enduring puzzles.*

Purposes include, but are not limited to, the following: advancing knowledge or culture through original research or creative activities; interpreting knowledge within or across disciplines; synthesizing information across disciplines, across topics, or across time; aiding society or disciplines in addressing problems; or enhancing knowledge of student learning and effective teaching.

Typically, to be considered scholarship, findings should be disseminated to either peer review by disciplinary scholars or professional or governmental organizations; or critical reflection by a wider community, including corporations or non-profit organizations, for example.

In addition to these scholarly activities, and depending on the specific Department Guidelines, this category may also include activities in which the faculty member shares other knowledge with members of the learned and professional communities; continued education and professional development activities appropriate to professional status or assignments; and other activities specific to the faculty member's discipline or assigned responsibilities.

The Department deems that “creative work and scholarly activity” may be evidenced by, for example, but not limited to: professional publication; talks at professional conferences; book and literature reviews; comments on the aforementioned; work as referee for presses or journals; or engaging in a serious program of reading, and self-development, sharing the results with department members and other faculty. Other activities, such as “continuing education” and “professional development” may be evidenced by, for example, but not limited to: additional course work or certifications; and/or attendance at national, local, or departmental meetings and colloquia related to the discipline or the profession or grant writing activities and other funding proposals.

Additional requirements and desiderata are outlined in the attached Codicil A, as adopted 7 March 2014.

Insufficient Performance

For example, someone who did not do any of the aforementioned and instead never engaged in a program of reading, writing or sharing their scholarly activities with others, etc. would not meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

Sufficient for satisfying the Department's Professional Development requirement for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor is the acceptance for publication of one academic book or the acceptance for publication of two major peer-reviewed or invited articles. Major publications include: a book chapter, a journal article, a substantial article (2500 words) for a major encyclopedia, (for instance, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy), the editing of a book collection, and other work determined by the Department PTR Committee to be equivalent to one. In addition, the submission of a major grant proposal (for instance, a grant proposal to the NEH) is the equivalent of one publication. Any combination of two of the following may be substituted for one of the publications: a paper presented at a major conference (for instance, a meeting of the American Philosophical Association), a substantial commentary at a conference on a book or paper (thirty minutes or more), a shorter encyclopedia article (1000 words), a substantial book review (1500 words),. The authority to determine whether a given work satisfies one of these conditions lies in the Department PTR Committee.

Required for Promotion to Professor

For example, someone who did all or most of the aforementioned and performed those in a superlative fashion or who published at prestigious university presses and/or served as invited keynote or plenary speakers at conferences and/or who was asked to organize panels or conferences, etc. would meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Post-Tenure Review

Sufficient for satisfying the Department's requirements of Post-Tenure Review is to publish two articles or a book or to show significant progress toward the publication of a number of articles or a book.

C. Service

The Handbook states: *Faculty engage in service when they participate in the shared governance and good functioning of the institution; service to the institution can be at the program, department, school, or college level. Beyond the institution, faculty engage in service when they use their disciplinary and/or professional expertise and talents to contribute to the betterment of their multiple environments, such as regional communities, professional and disciplinary associations, non-profit organizations, or government agencies.*

The Department deems that "institutional" service may be evidenced by, for example, but not limited to: the fulfillment of departmental chores and responsibilities; membership in an active or ongoing committee or task force; conducting a specific activity as directed by the Chair or Dean; mentoring a new faculty member; or peer-review of both full-time and part-time faculty. Service beyond the institution – to the community, the state, the nation or the profession – may be evidenced by, for example, but not limited to: work for community or professional organizations, serving as an officer on the board of said organizations; giving a speech or participating in a round-table on contemporary issues; or providing expertise to organizations, schools, media or other relevant entities.

Insufficient Performance

For example, someone who did not do any of the aforementioned and instead rarely attended department meetings and/or never served on committees or task forces or never performed any specific activity as directed by the Chair or the Dean, etc. would not meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Tenure and Promotion to Associate Professor

For example, someone who did all or many of the aforementioned activities and accomplished them to a high level of competence would meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Required for Promotion to Professor

For example, someone who did most or all of the aforementioned activities and those in a superlative fashion or who chairs or otherwise directs a committee or task force or who creates a new service opportunity of importance to the University; or who serves in a national or international level for a cause or profession, etc. would meet the relevant standards and expectations.

Require for Post-Tenure Review

Same as for Tenure and Promotion to Professor.

D. Miscellany***Required for Emeritus Status***

To qualify as an Emeritus Professor in Philosophy, a retired faculty member must, in addition to meeting the requirements set forth in the Handbook:

1. Be nominated for emeritus status by the Department Chair or other tenured faculty member.
2. Be approved for emeritus status by a majority of the voting tenured faculty in the Department.

Required for Moving from Position of Junior Lecturer to Senior Lecturer

To move from a position of Junior Lecturer in Philosophy to Senior Lecturer, a Junior Lecturer must, in addition to meeting the standards set out in the Handbook:

1. Have taught at least three different courses for the Department.
2. Be approved for promotion by a majority of the voting tenured faculty members.

Classroom Observation Policy

In their probationary period, full-time faculty members shall be observed by the Department Chair in the first year and at least twice during the course of the probationary period by other senior members of the department.

Tenured professors shall be observed by the Chair at least once in each five-year PTR period and at least once by another tenured member of the Department.

In their first three years, affiliate instructors shall be observed every year, with at least one of those observations being by the Department Chair. Afterwards, affiliate instructors shall be observed by a program faculty member at least once in a two-year period.